

# THE PERFECT HUSBAND

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By Frank Norris

THERE was a sullen silence across the breakfast table. Lucy Valentine bent her head, and unseeing poked at her food. Her husband finished his ham and eggs deliberately, pushed away his plate, and lounging back in his chair, sucked the wind through his teeth with little smacking noises of his tongue. Then he leisurely folded the morning newspaper, rose, took his hat and coat from the closet, and stalked out of the apartment without a word, sharply slamming the outer door behind him.

Lucy sat on, thinking. A look of hopelessness, almost of despair, settled upon her face. That was Tom—that was the way Tom acted; they were in for another dreary spell of surliness. She thought over the thirteen years of her married life; she envisioned the thirteen that might follow—the twenty-six perhaps. That was to be her fate, yoked to a churl, unloving and ill-mannered, who was insensible of how he offended her. And the thought that infuriated her most was that Tom regarded himself as a perfect husband, faithful, good, generous, devoted to her and to his home! It was true enough. In fairness, Lucy had to admit that Tom was generous; he was faithful; he earned a good salary; he saved; he spent every night and every Sunday at home and gave her an ample allowance. He considered that by this he discharged his duty as a husband, nobly, and regarded the cause of their constant bickerings, which recently he had chosen to treat in moody silence, as being entirely his wife's responsibility. He never missed an opportunity to point out to her that he had no vices; he did not even smoke. He regarded her sourly as an ungrateful spouse—a cranky, unreasonable, nervous woman.

LUCY rocker her head in her hands and moaned. Tom was so egregiously stupid, so self-satisfied, so blind, she could have forgiven his obtuseness, but she could not forgive his rudeness. Every day of his life he unconsciously affronted her, and almost as frequently did so deliberately. He growled at her, sneered at her, and when crossed, shouted her into silence.

She had rebelled this morning. The incident that had precipitated the whole trouble had been of trivial inconsequence; it always was. Tom had said the cream was sour and she had casually remarked that she didn't see how that could be since it was the milkmaid's delivery, and then he had shouted at her that he guessed he knew what he was talking about, and that when he said the cream was sour it was sour. She had said nothing in reply; she had considered his ungraciousness dispositionally for a time and then in the midst of the breakfast she had suddenly put her clasped hands down before her on the table and said her say temperately and earnestly, urging her to courteous treatment. She was familiar with the look of displeasure that came into his face as he listened, and reaching for an argument that would strengthen her words, she had alluded to Mr. Gray and his wife, who lived in the adjoining apartment, and that had proved the spark to his anger.

For Tom hated the Grays, hated everything about them. The suite of rooms these neighbors occupied was on the same floor as the Valentines'; an air-well separated the two establish-



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ments, and upon this source of light and ventilation a bedroom window of each apartment gave vent. Much that went on in the Gray household could be heard on the Valentines' and Tom and Lucy listened to the stray words and casual conversations that went on between their unsuspecting neighbors, unabashed.

Lucy loved the way in which the Grays spoke to each other. It was so different from that to which she was accustomed. The man had extraordinary manners; his voice; it was beautifully modulated, and when he happened to address his wife as "my dear," it was like a caress. Tom chose to ridicule the little intimate things they said to one another, and to imitate Mr. Gray's manner. It made Lucy acutely uncomfortable, for she admired Mrs. Gray, was generous and kind to her, and was in terror lest Tom should be in turn overheard.

Lucy had had her misgivings as to the decency of listening to her friend's confidential murmurings with her husband, but she assured herself that her motive was not unworthy curiosity. It was merely that she enjoyed with a hungry soul the manner in which this particular husband and wife spoke to each other. It was beautiful, it soothed her, it was like exquisite distant music.

LUCY, shaken, bewildered, the significance of what had occurred still half-guessed, mechanically obeyed. Mechanically she unglazed stray locks of hair under her hat, mechanically she ordered. But when the obsequious head waiter had murmured: "Bien, madame," and had departed, she could only keep her eyes on her plate and sit tongue-tied, fearful of any comment she might hazard, miserably conscious of what must be her friend's humiliation and discomfort. That unquestionably had been Alonzo Gray, and the woman with him had been—Lucy knew with unmistakable intuition that the woman was not of her world. Alice had seen it all; she had understood and had saved Alonzo from precipitating a frightfully embarrassing encounter. And it had been Alonzo! Alonzo, the devoted, attentive, considerate companion—the sharer of her marriage vows—her mate, her man, her lawful wedded husband. About Lucy's head came tumbling a castle's walls and a much needed electric iron. In buoyant spirits they made a leisurely progress at a late luncheon hour to one of the smart, new French restaurants on Park avenue.

And almost at the entrance way, about to pass through the revolving glass doors to the street, absorbed and eagerly chatting together, they encountered Alonzo Gray and a handsomely dressed woman. A happy ex-

clamation burst from Lucy and she started forward with a delighted greeting.

"Why, it's your husband—it's Mr. Gray!"

But her words died on her lips. Alice Gray's fingers closed like a vice on her arm and the hand dragged her aside. Something ugly and unpleasant flashed into Lucy's mind. There was a whirling silence, a dizzy, moment while her pulse raced and her breath was still. Then, unconscious and still chatting amiably, Alonzo Gray and his companion passed into the street.

"Two, please—and in the corner. I like those upholstered seats." Alice Gray composedly ordered her waiter. He bowed and serenely followed him into the cool and flower-scented restaurant.

"Come, Lucy—"

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# THE FICKLE GODDESS

An Adventure of Aristide Pujol

By W. J. Locke

ARISTIDE lost the first game. He wiped the sweat from his forehead. In the second game he won the vole in one hand. The third and final game began. They played slowly, carefully, with keen, quick eyes. Their breathing came hard. The count's lips, parted beneath the uncounted mistakes, showed his teeth like a shark's. He lost sense of all other things in the thrill of the encounter. They snarled the stereotyped phrases necessary for the conduct of the game. At last the points stood at four for Aristide and three for the adversary. It was Aristide's deal. Before turning up the eleventh card he paused for the fraction of a second. "I should like to deal two hands at scarte. It signifies nothing. It is an experiment. Will you cut?"

"Volontiers," said the count.

Aristide took up the pack, dealt three cards to the count, three cards to himself, two cards to the count, two to himself, and turned up the king of hearts as the eleventh card.

"Monsieur," said he, "depose your hand and I will expose mine."

Both men threw their hands face up on the table. Aristide's was full of trumps, the count's of valueless cards.

"I have no words to thank you, Monsieur Pujol," she said, with tears in her eyes. "I have heard how you shamed him at the tables. It was brave of you."

"It was nothing." He shrugged his shoulders as if he were in the habit of doing deeds like that every day of his life. "And your exquisite daughter, madame?"

"Poor Betty! She is prostrate. She says she will never hold up her head again. Her heart is broken."

"It is young and will be mended," said Aristide.

"She smiled sadly. 'It will be a question of time. But she is grateful to you, Monsieur Pujol. She realizes from what a terrible fate you have saved her.'"

"After this," she continued, "a further stay in Aix would be too painful. We have decided to take the Savoy express this evening and get back to our quiet home in Somerset."

"Ah, madame," said Aristide earnestly. "And shall I not have the pleasure of seeing the charming Miss Betty again?"

"You will come and stay with us in September. Let me see? The 15th. Why not fix a date? You have my address? No? Will you write it down?" She dictated: "Wrotesly Manor, Burnholme, Somerset. There I'll try to show you how grateful I am."

heaval. He saw it all, the whole mocking drama.

He, Aristide Pujol, was the most sweetly, the most completely swindled man in France.

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THE Comte de Lussigny, the mild Mrs. Errington and the beautiful Betty were in league together and had conspired as soon as he had accused the count of cheating. The rascal must have gone straight to them from Miller's room. No wonder that Lussigny, when insulted at the tables, had sat like a tame rabbit and had sought him in the garden. No wonder he had accepted the accusation of adventurer. No wonder he had refused to play for the cheque which he knew to be valueless. But why, thought Aristide, did he not at once consent to sell the papers on the stipulation that he should be paid in notes? Aristides found an answer. He wanted to get everything for nothing, afraid of the use that Aristide might make of a damning confession, and also relying for success on his manipulation of the cards. Finally he had desired to get hold of a dangerous cheque. In that he had gone wrong. But the trio had got away with his thousand pounds, his wonderful thousand pounds.

He reflected, still keeping an attentive eye on young Eugene Miller and interjecting a sympathetic word, that after he had paid his hotel bill he would be as poor on quitting Aix-les-Bains as he was when he had entered it. So transit. As it was in the beginning with Aristide Pujol, is now and ever shall be.

"But I have my clothes—such clothes as I've never had in my life," thought Aristide. "And a diamond and sapphire tie-pin and a gold watch, and all sorts of other things. Tron de l'air, I'm still rich."

"Who would have thought she was like that?" said he. "And a hundred pounds, too. A lot of money."

"For nothing in the world would he have confessed himself a fellow victim."

"I don't care a cent for the hundred pounds," cried the young man. "Our factory turns out seven hundred and sixty-seven million pairs of boots per annum." (Aristide, not I, is responsible for the statistics.) "But I have a feeling that in this hoary country I'm just a little toddling child. And I hate it. I do, sir. I want a nurse to take me round."

Paris, July 12, 1922.

THE French government has done all its usual honor to American newspapermen, in giving a permanent place in its art galleries to the portrait of Frank B. Noyes, president of the Associated Press, painted by Ossip Perelma.

Final delivery by the artist was made on April 16, and the painting is now on view at the Grand Palais des Champs-Élysées, in the large state acquired canvas area first put on exhibition, awaiting their final destination in the Luxembourg or other public art gallery.

The portrait was done at Washington, the home of Mr. Noyes, when Perelma, who is called the "Russian Rembrandt," made a tour of the United States, which lasted for several years and on which he received commissions to do many notable personages. Perelma, at San Francisco, he painted Senator Phelan. At Dearborn, he did Henry Ford's portrait for him. At Detroit, it was Joe Henry and Henry Wood Booth, father of George Booth, who publishes the Detroit News. At Dayton, he did Gov. Cox. At Baltimore, he began President Harding (then a candidate), and finished him at Washington.

Then the Russian painter did a novel thing. In truth, the times were just ripe for it. He returned to Paris, bringing with him loan exhibition of his own works that attracted great attention. It consisted of a hundred and more of these portraits of American men—men only. It approximated the first gallery of representative American men ever presented to the gaze of Europe. Many of the names had become household words in Paris at the time of the peace conference.

Among these portraits was that of the president of the Associated Press, which a French government decree, on proposition of the minister of public instruction and beaux-arts, makes a permanent acquisition of the state.

It is the third work of Perelma to find an official place in France. The first is the Metchnikoff portrait, which hangs in the library of the Pasteur Institute. The other is "The French Victory," acquired by the French government from the exposition of Rouen in full war time (1916).

Until most works of the "Russian Rembrandt," the present portrait is in bright colors. Mr. Noyes, in white tennis suit, is seated in a chair in his garden, which is all aglow with radiant sunlight and the colors of flowers and fruits. In the mind of the painter, who is an enthusiast of American types, there is a kind of symbolism in this light and color and "the ambience of happiness and perfume" of American life and character as he found it—a parallel in "the generosity of nature in that garden and in the greatness of soul of these men!"

HE looked at his adversary with his roguish, triumphant smile. The count looked at him darkly. "The ordinary cardplayer does not know how to deal like that," he said with sinister significance.

"But I am not ordinary in anything, my dear sir," laughed Aristide in his large boastfulness. "If I were, do you think I would have agreed to your absurd proposal? Voyons, I only wanted to show you that in dealing cards I am your equal. Now the lot is yours." The count threw a small packet on the table. "You will permit me? I do not wish to read them. I verify only. 'Good,' said he. "And the confession?"

"What you like," said the count coldly. Aristide scribbled a few lines that would have been devastating to the character of a Hyrcanean tiger and handed the paper and fountain pen to the count.

"Will you sign?"

The count glanced at the words and signed.

"Volla," said Aristide, laying Mrs. Errington's cheque beside the documents. "Now let us play. The best of three games?"

"Good," said the count. "But you will excuse me, monsieur, if I claim to play for ready money. The cheque will take five days to negotiate and I lose it. I shall evidently have to leave Aix tomorrow morning."

"That's reasonable," said Aristide. He drew out his fat note-case and counted twenty-five one-thousand-franc notes on to the table. And then began the most exciting game of cards he had ever played. In the first place he was playing with another person's money for a fantastic stake, as a girl's honor and a fantastic fortune. Then he would visit the Erringtons in England, and if the beautiful Miss Betty smiled on him—why, after all, he was an honest man, without a feather on his conscience.

"Good," said Aristide. A little later Mrs. Errington met him in the lounge and accompanied him to the lawn, where they had sat the day before.

SHE extended her hand. He bowed over it and kissed it in his French way and departed a very happy man. The Erringtons left that evening. Aristide laywaid them as they were entering the hotel omnibus with a preposterous bouquet of flowers, which he presented to Betty, whose pretty face was hidden by a motor veil. He bowed, laid his hand on his heart and said: "Adieu, mademoiselle."

"No," she said in a low voice, but most graciously, "Au revoir, Monsieur Pujol."

For the next few days Aix seemed to be tame and colorless. In an inexplicable fashion, too, it had become unprofitable. Aristide no longer knew that he was going to win, and he did not win. He lost considerably. So much so that on the morning when he was to draw the cash for the cheque at the Credit Lyonnais he had only fifty pounds and some odd shillings. "Aristide, looking at the remainder rather ruefully, made a great resolution. He would gamble no more. Already he was richer than he had ever been in his life. He would leave Aix. Tiens! Why should he not go to his good friends at Bocarbons at Nimes, bringing with him a gold chain for Bocarbon and a pair of earrings for the adorable Zette? There he would look about him. He would use the thousand pounds as a stepping-stone to legitimate fortune. Then he would visit the Erringtons in England, and if the beautiful Miss Betty smiled on him—why, after all, he was an honest man, without a feather on his conscience.

So, jauntily swinging his cane, he marched into the office of the Credit Lyonnais, went into the inner room and explained his business.

Heat and Life.

WE often speak of our bodies as machines or engines working upon principles similar to those employed in mechanics. The idea that the food we eat resembles in its action the fuel supplied to a furnace is familiar, and yet one can hardly avoid a little start of surprise upon learning that the laws of heat-engines are so liberally applied to explain the growth of plant and animal life.

This has been done in a most interesting way by a British scientist before the Philosophical Society in London. He points out, for instance, that the increase of available energy, resulting from the building up of a plant out of inorganic materials, can only be explained, in accordance with thermo-dynamic laws, by differences of temperature during the growth of the plant, and his calculations show that the difference between day and night is quite sufficient to account for the differences of temperature required.

Similar principles apply to the growth of animals. Nature gives nothing for nothing, and demands an exact equivalent for every expenditure of her energies, whether she is aiding man to drive an engine, causing an oak to grow, or building up the muscles of an athlete or the brain of a philosopher. And as far as her work upon the planet is concerned, the source of her supplies in all these cases is the sun.

Monsieur has the largest pineapple canneries in the world.

Liquefying Carbon.

CARBON may be melted and maintained in a liquid condition, according to the experiments of a French investigator. The heating was effected under great pressure in the electric furnace, and a curious phenomenon was noticed at 1,599 atmospheres, namely, that after a brief failure of the arc, the current refused to pass even when the pressure was much increased. It is supposed that the carbon passed into a liquid and transparent state, it assumed a rare allotropic form, becoming a non-conductor. The test was too brief for a study of this condition, but was made to include a sudden cooling of the molten carbon by a flooding with water of the interior of the pressure vessel. The minute diamond, which is recognized in its gray powder thus obtained, the result being, however, not wholly satisfactory.

Scientific methods for cutting down the fatigue of factory workers is proving successful, the result in one day being a 10 per cent increase in efficiency.